

BASIS FOR THE AMENDMENT

Claims 3, 13, and 20 have been canceled. The remaining claims have been amended to correct minor informalities.

Claims 22-25 have been added as supported by Claims 10 and 17, respectively.

No new matter is believed to have been added by entry of this amendment. Entry and favorable reconsideration are respectfully requested.

Upon entry of this amendment Claims 1, 4, 5, 10-12, 14-19 and 22-25 will now be active in this application.

INTERVIEW SUMMARY

Applicants wish to thank Examiner Nguyen for the helpful and courteous discussion with Applicants' Representative on May 23, 2005. During this discussion it was noted that the Examiner has recognized that U.S. 6,107,226 has no disclosure of the choline chloride absorption or the ratio of DBP/choline chloride absorption. However, she has taken the position that the precipitation of silica in the '226 patent is carried out by a similar process as in the present invention. As a result, the Examiner is of the opinion that the silica of the '226 patent has the same choline chloride absorption and DBP/choline chloride absorption ratio as the silica of the present invention. Applicants disagree and provide a detailed explanation below.

The Examiner also thinks a constant alkaline number is inherent because a constant pH value is used in the method. Applicants disagree and provide a detailed explanation below.

Claims 3, 13, 20 have been canceled as requested by the Examiner.

REMARKS

Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the application, as amended, in view of the following remarks.

The present invention as set forth in **amended Claim 1** relates to a precipitated silica having a DBP absorption of from 100 to 450 g/100 g, a choline chloride absorption of from 150 to 400 g/100 g (75% absorption by weight aqueous solution); and a DBP/choline chloride absorption of less than 1.07.

Amended Claim 10 relates to a process for preparing precipitated silica having the above properties, comprising, inter alia, simultaneously metering into an aqueous silicate solution more aqueous silicate solution and a Lewis and/or Brønsted acid to provide a mixture, **wherein the metered addition of the aqueous silicate solution and the Lewis and/or Brønsted acid is carried out while maintaining a constant alkali number in the mixture of at least 1.**

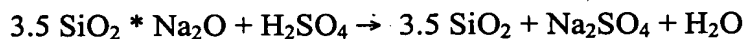
Amended Claim 17 relates to a process for preparing precipitated silica having the above properties, comprising, inter alia, simultaneously metering into a vessel an aqueous silicate solution and a Lewis and/or Brønsted acid to provide a mixture, **wherein the metered addition of the aqueous silicate solution and the Lewis and/or Brønsted acid is carried out while maintaining a constant alkali number in the mixture of at least 1.**

In contrast, Chevallier (US 6, 107,226) fails to disclose or suggest a precipitated silica and processes as claimed. In particular, the product of Chevallier cannot have the claimed choline chloride absorption and the ratio of DBP/choline chloride absorption.

The examiner asserts that precipitation at constant pH is equivalent to precipitation at constant alkali number. Applicants disagree.

In the following, Applicants explain in detail the differences between pH-controlled and alkali-number-controlled precipitations. To be able to understand the said differences, it is first necessary to understand the basic principle of each precipitation.

The basic principle of each precipitation is described by the following equation:



In the ideal case, 1 molecule of Na_2O reacts with 1 molecule of H_2SO_4 . In reality, however, this does not happen. "Side reactions" must be considered here. For example, at the instant at which the SiO_2 particles are formed, some " Na_2O " molecules can become included in the interior of the particle or fixed in the pores. This leads to the need to distinguish between four types of Na_2O molecules:

- a) Na_2O molecules that have reacted with H_2SO_4 to form $\text{Na}_2\text{SO}_4 + \text{H}_2\text{O}$,
- b) Na_2O molecules that are included in the SiO_2 particle,
- c) Na_2O molecules that are fixed in the pores or on the surface of the SiO_2 particles,
- d) Na_2O molecules that remain as soluble silicate in the suspension.

The Na_2O molecules cited under a) no longer exist as Na_2O molecules, but have reacted and can be analyzed by determination of the Na_2SO_4 content. The remaining Na_2O types (b to d) are present unchanged as " Na_2O " and can be determined (analyzed) as follows:

Measurement of the pH:

In the measurement of the pH of a precipitation suspension, only the Na_2O molecules according to (d) are detected, or in other words the "free Na_2O concentration".

Measurement of the alkali number:

In determination of the alkali number, the "free Na_2O concentration" (d) and in addition the Na_2O molecules fixed in the pores or on the silica surface (c) are detected.

Elemental analysis:

Finally, by means of elemental analysis, it is possible to determine, besides the “free Na_2O ” (d) and the Na_2O bound on the silica surface (c), the Na_2O molecules that are included inside the silica (b). In this way, therefore, all Na_2O molecules according to b), c) and d) are detected.

Different precipitation methods are named for the parameters that are maintained constant. Thus, in pH precipitations, the pH (Na_2O type d) is constant during precipitation, while in alkali-number precipitations the alkali number (Na_2O types c + d) is constant.

The following diagrams illustrate the difference between the two precipitation methods:

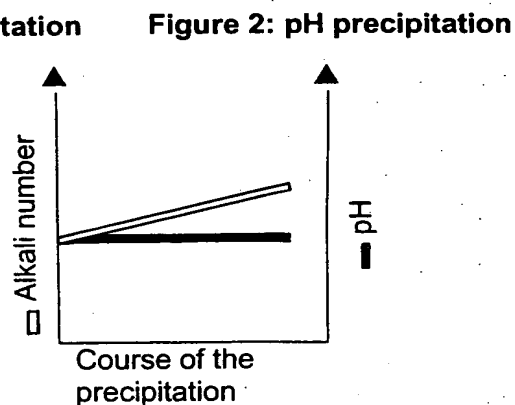
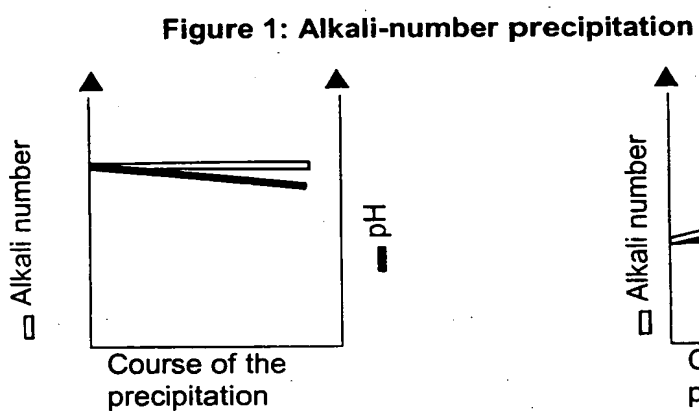


Figure 1 schematically represents an inventive precipitation at constant alkali number (alkali-number precipitation). In this method, more Na_2O is included in the SiO_2 matrix of the silica particles or is bound at the silica surface and in the pores (Na_2O type (c)) as the alkali number becomes higher.

Since both the (c) and (d) types of Na_2O are detected in determination of the alkali number and their sum remains constant, this leads – considering the fact that the number of Na_2O molecules bound at the silica surface (c) increases – to the situation that the number of free Na_2O molecules (d) decreases in the course of precipitation.

Figure 2 schematically illustrates a typical pH precipitation according to Chevallier. Here also, the Na_2O concentration in solution and the Na_2O included in the SiO_2 matrix of the silica particles or bound at the silica surface increase as the pH becomes higher. Since the pH detects only type (d) Na_2O and the concentration of this type is supposed to remain constant, progressively more Na_2O relative to H_2SO_4 must be added in the course of precipitation. Consequently, the alkali number, or in other words the sum of the Na_2O molecules of types (c) + (d), increases in the course of precipitation.

Figures 1 and 2 illustrate the fact that pH-controlled and alkali-number-controlled precipitations are fundamentally different precipitation methods. This means on the one hand that the ratios of water glass to sulfuric acid must be adjusted differently and on the other hand that the reaction medium in which the silica agglomerates grow is completely different. This in turn leads to the situation that silicas with completely different properties are obtained depending on precipitation method. The examiner's assertion that the precipitation methods of Chevallier and of the invention are similar and that the silicas therefore have the same properties therefore lacks any foundation.

A further substantial difference between the precipitation methods of Chevallier and of the present invention is the number of precipitation steps.

The method of the present invention is a **one-stage method**. Thus water glass and acid are simultaneously added to a receiver containing water + water glass. After the precipitation, the reaction is ended by addition of further sulfuric acid (see page 5, "general experimental protocol").

In contrast, the method of Chevallier is a **two-stage precipitation**. Thus, in a receiver containing water glass, there is first added an acidifying agent, leading to a first precipitation (see column 3, lines 37 to 63). After this first step, a reaction mixture containing both precipitated silica (in the form of "growth nuclei") and unreacted water glass is formed. This reaction mixture is used in Chevallier as the receiver solution for the second precipitation step, in which water glass and acid are added simultaneously (see column 3, lines 64 to 67).

The precipitation methods of Chevallier and of the invention therefore also differ in terms of the receiver solution. Chevallier uses a receiver solution containing "silica growth nuclei", whereas, in the method of the present invention, only water glass and water are present in the receiver. It is easy to understand that precipitation in a receiver containing growth nuclei leads to products different from those obtained by precipitation in a receiver solution of water glass.

In summary, the methods described in Chevallier and in the present invention are fundamentally different precipitation methods. The two methods must necessarily lead to different products. Thus, the product of Chevallier cannot have the claimed choline chloride absorption and the ratio of DBP/choline chloride absorption.

Therefore, the rejection of Claims 1, 4-5, 10-12, 14-19 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Chevalier (US 6, 107,226) is believed to be unsustainable as the present invention is neither anticipated nor obvious and withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Application No.: 10/079,479

Reply to Office Action dated: April 21, 2005

In this connection, Applicants note that in the corresponding Taiwanese application the rejections based on Chevallier were withdrawn and a patent was granted.

The rejection of Claims 3, 13 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, 1st paragraph, is moot in view of the cancellation of these claims.

Even though the Examiner has clearly considered the reference filed February 25, 2005, as chevalier is used for the present rejection, Applicants still would appreciate if the Examiner could forward an initialed, signed and dated Form PTO 1449. For the Examiner's convenience a copy of **Form PTO 1449 as filed on February 25, 2005**, is attached herewith.

This application presents allowable subject matter, and the Examiner is kindly requested to pass it to issue. Should the Examiner have any questions regarding the claims or otherwise wish to discuss this case, he is kindly invited to contact Applicants' below-signed representative, who would be happy to provide any assistance deemed necessary in speeding this application to allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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